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SUBJECT: SERBIA ADOPTS CONTROVERSIAL MEDIA LAW

REF: BELGRADE 791

Summary

¶1. (SBU) The National Assembly of Serbia adopted a controversial Media Law on August 31, which President Tadic signed the same day. The Law was adopted by a narrow majority of 125 votes with the help of opposition leader result in censorship. The Journalists' Association and the Serbian Progressive Party announced plans to challenge the legality of the new leg in order to reduce the possibility for abuse of its provisions. End Summary.

Dispute within the Governing Coalition

¶2. (SBU) Returning from summer recess, the National Assembly adopted the controversial Law on Media on August 31. The voting day started wit What the New Law Provides

¶3. (U) The newly-adopted Media Law significantly increases the fines for violations of journalists' rules of conduct; fines reach \$350,000 fc Supporters

¶4. (U) Serbian President Boris Tadic signed the Media Law into force immediately after its passage, surprising many observers and derailing a Journalists' Association of Serbia (UNS) to refer the law to the Constitutional Court for review before it went into force. His press office i

Critics

¶5. (U) Most opposition political parties and almost all editors-in-chief of major media outlets sharply criticized the law, focusing primarily affiliated judges, and made Serbia one of the most restrictive media environments in Europe.

Next Steps

¶6. (U) As President Tadic's immediate signature of the law prevented the referral to the Constitutional Court that would have delayed its im

Comment

¶7. (SBU) LDP, an opposition party, has now stepped in on several occasions to provide a majority when the members of the ruling coalition could not agree on key legislation. It is not yet clear how LDP will benefit from this "shadow" support, but it is safe to assume that Boris Tadic is grateful for and therefore appears to have ended discussion of new elections for the time being. Environment Minister and DS leader Oliver Dulic told the C BRUSH